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V. The Critical Imitator of Jesus: A Contribution to the Interpretation of Nietzsche on the Basis of a Comparison

Eugen Biser
(Translated by Timothy F. Sellner)

I. The Impulse to a Comparison of the Two Figures

In the recently discovered Gospel of Thomas, which came to light as the result of a grave find in Upper Egypt, Jesus addresses Himself to His disciples with the challenge: "Compare me, and tell me whom I am like" (Logion 13[1]). Seen in the context of the 114 statements of Jesus summarized in this gnostic gospel writing, these words are uttered not out of a feeling of uncertainty and the need for identity—such as might be inferred from the biographical context of the parallel canonical text, the scene at Caesarea Philippi (Matt. 16:13–20)—but rather out of the consciousness of an ultimate incomparability, and they are spoken with the unequivocal intention of bringing this incomparability to light.[2]

Over against this we have Nietzsche's appeal to his interpreters: "Above all, do not mistake me for someone else!"[3] He would have considered it an excess of such a "mistaken identity" if he were someday—as he fears in *Ecce Homo* (and quite rightly so, to judge by a number of rampant growths in the history of the interpretation of that work)—to be pronounced holy.[4] To this extent his challenge, in contrast to the intention implied by the words of Jesus, is upheld by

1. Cf. Willem Cornelis van Unnik, *Evangelien aus dem Nilsand* (original title: *Openbaringen uit egyptisch zand*) (Frankfurt am Main: Scheffler, 1960).

2. Martin Buber, in his book *Zwei Glaubensweisen* (Zurich: Manesse, 1950), pp. 28ff., interprets this passage in the sense of a fundamental uncertainty; on this point, cf. the exposition in my book *Der Helfer: Eine Vergegenwärtigung Jesu* (Munich: Kösel, 1973), pp. 89ff.

3. *Ecce Homo*, Preface, sec. 1. All translations from the German are by Timothy F. Sellner.

4. Ibid., "Why I Am a Destiny," sec. 1.

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the consciousness of a special affinity with the figures being compared with him—and thus of an overarching comparability between himself and the other figures. The extent to which this consciousness took possession of Nietzsche toward the end of his creative life is shown by the note from his *Nachlaß* stating that he had always lived "in that which had moved Zarathustra, Moses, Mohammed, Jesus, Plato, Brutus, Spinoza, [and] Mirabeau,"[5] but it is shown above all by the phrase in the great letter to Jakob Burckhardt from the days of Nietzsche's collapse, in which he states that it is unpleasant for him and offends his modesty "that in the final analysis every name in history" is his own[6] (a statement that finds its negation, however, in the admission stemming from the period of *Zarathustra*: "I longed for people, I sought after people—I found only myself").[7]

In this context it is perhaps relevant to note that there arises from Nietzsche, as from hardly any other figure in modern intellectual history, a permanent impulse to ever new comparisons; the course of his influence consists, in significant measure, in the conclusions derived from an analysis of Nietzsche's relationship with these other figures.[8] The arc formed by the figures brought into comparison with Nietzsche extends surprisingly far, not least by virtue of the affinities made apparent by the glaring light of his love-hate relationship with them: it extends from Hölderlin, whose similarity in type to Nietzsche had already occurred to his contemporaries, back to Pascal (Vaglia), Dante (Biser), Socrates (Sandvoss), Kierkegaard (Jaspers), and Heine (Spencer), as well as forward to Dostoevsky (Shestov), Kafka (Sokel), and to Thomas Mann (Pütz), who wove together significant elements from Nietzsche's biography into the figure of his Doctor Faustus, conceived as the symbolic representation of the decadence of the German *Geist*.[9]

The most extreme position of anyone utilizing this approach was taken by Franz Brentano, in an essay from his *Nachlaß*, when he juxtaposed the author of *The Antichrist* and the founder of Christianity.[10] Conversely, shortly before Nietzsche's death the Russian phi-

5. *Nachlaß* (Die Unschuld des Werdens, II), sec. 1117.

6. Nietzsche to Jakob Burckhardt, 6 January 1889.

7. *Nachlaß* (Die Unschuld des Werdens, II), sec. 1167.

8. Cf. the introductory remarks to my article "Nietzsche und Dante. Ein werkbiographischer Strukturvergleich," in *Nietzsche Studien*, 5 (1976), 146f.

9. Cf. further Peter Pütz, "Thomas Mann und Nietzsche," in *Nietzsche: Werk und Wirkungen*, ed. Hans Steffen (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1974), pp. 91–114.

10. Franz Brentano, "Nietzsche als Nachahmer Jesu," in Franz Brentano, *Die Lehre Jesu und ihre bleibende Bedeutung*, ed. Alfred Kastil (Leipzig: Meiner, 1922), pp. 129–32.

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losopher of religion Vladimir Soloviev, in his "Short Story of the Antichrist," had stylized Nietzsche into the precursor of the adversary of God who will appear in the last days.[11] In spite of the distortion caused by Nietzsche's most extreme denial of God, he appears even here to possess a "subliminal" kinship to Jesus, so that the comparison undertaken by Brentano can be considered merely as the consistent elaboration of a thought-model that is already to be found in Soloviev. It is no less consistent that Brentano concentrates his investigation on those specific statements in which the self-interpretation of both figures under comparison can be documented.[12] Just as Jesus understood Himself as the light shining in the darkness, so Nietzsche, according to Brentano, also perceived himself "as a superabundance of light"; just as it is reported of Jesus that He spoke with authority, so Nietzsche, he states, also took to giving orders rather than offering arguments; just as Jesus preaches conversion, Nietzsche also demands "the revaluation of all values"; and just as Jesus lived in the consciousness that "in Him the fullness of time had come," Nietzsche also viewed himself, in Brentano's version, as an event of epochal significance that was determining the course of human history. Yet no matter to what extent Nietzsche took Jesus "as his model," his attempt not only to equal Him, but to surpass Him, becomes for Brentano a mere caricature, especially since his "teaching concerning the pitilessness of the overman" was refuted by his own life history in the sense that he saw himself dependent on pity and compassion as almost no other.

Whoever still wished to speak of similarity in the face of such contradictions would expose himself to not only the ridicule, but also the indignant protest of Nietzsche himself, if the latter had not already challenged him to make comparisons by virtue of his own demand not to be taken for someone else. This is reason enough, it seems, to examine the problem—alluded to by Brentano but not elaborated upon—once again from the distant perspective of the half century or more that has elapsed since his work.

11. Cf. the analysis in my study *"Gott ist tot": Nietzsches Destruktion des christlichen Bewußtseins* (Munich: Kösel, 1962), pp. 267f., where Nietzsche is also compared structurally with Soloviev; cf. also my article "Das Desiderat einer Nietzsche-Hermeneutik," in *Nietzsche Studien*, 9 (1980), 19f.

12. In spite of its sketchy nature, Brentano's article could actually be described as a comparative analysis of christological declarations of nobility; for further information on this topic, see the investigation by Ferdinand Hahn, *Christologische Hoheitstitel. Ihre Geschichte im frühen Christentum* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1966).

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II. Jesus within the Scope of Nietzsche's Critique of Christianity

In Nietzsche's view, the figure of Jesus does not receive its complete profile until it has been brought into connection with his critique of Christianity.[13] As is made clear in the vehement conclusion to *The Antichrist*—a passage that calls Christianity "the one great curse, the single great innermost corruption for which no means is poisonous, clandestine, subversive, petty enough," and finally "the single immortal blemish of humanity"—this critique has for its goal radical negation and destruction.[14] In the aggressiveness of this statement is reflected the crisis in the development of Nietzsche's work in which *The Antichrist* stood at that time. Originally conceived as the "first book" of the "revaluation of all values" and proclaimed in its subtitle as an "Attempt at a Critique of Christianity," the work was then plucked by Nietzsche from its planned context in the hectic rush of his last creative days—so evident in its concluding passages—and, having been provided with the new subtitle "Curse on Christianity," was brought into action as "heavy artillery" against the embodiment of all life-denying powers, the Christian religion.[15]

The question with which the "madman" concludes his proclamation of the death of God sounds hardly less radical: "What are these churches now if they are not the tombs and sepulchres of God?"[16] The context of these two utterances is rendered apparent through the idea developed by Jaspers that for Nietzsche God dies "through the consequences of Christianity."[17] Nevertheless, this context must be made broader by means of the opposing viewpoint that Christianity as "a system, as a thoroughly conceived and total view of things," is being destroyed by the concept of God on which it is based, a concept that Nietzsche understands as a syndrome of destructive

13. Karl Jaspers's essay *Nietzsche und das Christentum* (written 1938) must still be considered the best statement of the problem (1946; 2nd ed., Munich: Piper, 1952).

14. A, sec. 62.

15. The fact that Nietzsche increasingly fell into this attitude of the artillerist can be seen from the letter to Georg Brandes (20 November 1888) in which, alluding to *Ecce Homo*, he declares: "I am after all the foremost psychologist of Christianity and can, old artillerist that I am, bring up heavy artillery. . . ."

16. FW, III, sec. 125.

17. Jaspers, *Nietzsche und das Christentum*, p. 18.

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and life-denying tendencies.[18] For, as an institutional manifestation of the frustrating fiction that in the form of the concept of God gained power over man and robbed him of his best qualities, Christianity itself is an intellectual symbol of domination that draws its entire repressive power from the narcotic effect of the illusions unified within it. As such, it is simultaneously the "most disastrous kind of arrogance" ever known, as well as a "monstrous sickness of the will, which undermines, in addition to everything that promotes and favors life, the will to life itself." With its life-denying tendency it was the first really to conjure up the devil of negativism in the world, to raise ignorance to a virtue, to declare doubt a sin, to give Eros poison to drink and thereby to commit a singular crime against life.

In the nature of this fiction, however, lies also the chance for overcoming it. For it is merely necessary to break a single concept away from this fictional system or, better yet, to put a single reality in its place, "and the whole of Christianity hurtles down into nothingness."[19] In the meantime it is not only important for Nietzsche that those "spirits which have become free" should be seen through the "fabric of nineteen centuries of lies"; even more important is the notion that in Nietzsche's view Christianity, of its own accord, presently finds itself in a state of self-destruction that is being brought to light by the process of historical erosion. For like "all great things," Christianity is also condemned to perish of its own creations—first "as dogma," then "as morality," and thereby finally "through an act of self-overcoming": "After Christian truthfulness has drawn one conclusion after another, it must in the end draw its most striking conclusion, the conclusion against itself; this will happen, however, when it poses the question 'what is the meaning of all will to truth?' "[20] Nietzsche sees himself as an observer of this scene, standing at the "deathbed of Christianity," dazed and overcome by this great drama "in a hundred acts, reserved for the next two centuries in Europe," this "most terrible, most questionable, and perhaps also most hopeful of all dramas."[21]

Nevertheless, Nietzsche keeps in readiness not only his criticism of the system of Christianity, but also a "genealogical" explanation of the Christian religion. The first essay of his *Genealogy of Morals*, he assures us in *Ecce Homo*, offers "the psychology of Christianity,"

18. Cf. the explanation in my book *Theologie und Atheismus: Anstöße zu einer theologischen Aporetik* (Munich: Kösel, 1972), pp. 27ff.; 55f.

19. A, sec. 39.

20. GM, III, sec. 27.

21. M, I, sec. 52; GM, III, sec. 27.

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for it describes, as he states in an allusion to his famous early work, "the birth of Christianity out of the spirit of *ressentiment*."[22] What he has in mind concerning this "birth" he then develops in the notion that Christianity proceeded from a—truly world-altering—act of interpretation, and that for this reason it is to be understood in terms of its development as a unique "history of interpretation." At its beginning stood the fact of the death of Jesus, this "most horrible of paradoxes," which confronted the disciples, who were far from "forgiving this death," with the real riddle: "Who was this? What was this?"[23]

This fact remained to be interpreted. In the course of the history of interpretation that ensued, four interpretations came into play which have thereby "ruled over Christianity": "Judaism (Paul); Platonism (Augustine); the mystery cults (doctrine of redemption, emblem of the 'cross'); asceticism (—enmity toward 'nature,' 'reason,' 'the senses'—the Orient)."[24] The initiator of this process was Paul, who set to work with the logical cynicism of a rabbi and saw to it that the worst of all possible tidings followed on the heels of the glad tidings of Jesus by placing life's center of gravity "in the beyond" with his lie of the "resurrected" Jesus, and who thus for the first time really nailed the Redeemer to the cross—"to his own cross." While the "bearer of glad tidings" died as He lived and taught, and while He attempted with His death if necessary "to give the strongest demonstration, the proof of his teachings," Paul brought to the fore that feeling most alien to the gospel, revenge, by stylizing Jesus' death on the cross into a "sacrifice"; brought the question of the existence of the individual after death into a "causal connection with that sacrifice"; placed "the concepts of guilt and sin into the foreground"; falsified the "assassination attempt on priests and theologians" carried out by Jesus into a "new priesthood and theology"; and thus built up again in the grand style precisely "that which Christ had annulled by means of his life." Consequently, "in the concept 'Church' precisely that was canonized . . . which the 'bearer of glad tidings' felt was beneath him, behind him."

The result of this unfortunate history of interpretation set in mo-

22. *Ecce Homo*, "Why I Write Such Good Books": Genealogie der Moral.

23. A, sec. 40. The following quotations are taken from a collage of aphorisms 28–51 of A, along with sections 158–216 of the notes from the *Nachlaß* published under the title *The Will to Power*. The latter, too little acknowledged by scholars, must be considered as that collection of materials from which Nietzsche put together his last broadside against Christianity.

24. *Nachlaß* (WM), sec. 214.

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tion by Paul is quite obvious: " 'Christianity' has become something quite different from that which its founder did and what he wished"; and "The Church has become precisely that which Jesus preached against—and taught his disciples to fight." Strictly speaking, there is really no room for Jesus in this view of the question. As Jaspers quite appropriately sums it up, He has "actually nothing to do with the history of Christianity."[25] In the final analysis there was for Nietzsche "only *one* Christian, and he died on the cross."[26]

III. Jesus within the Context of Nietzsche's Conflict of Values

By means of this hermeneutic "trick" Nietzsche obtains a view of Jesus that is only slightly encumbered by his anti-Christian polemic. We must emphasize the word "view" (*Blick*) here, for to judge by one of the poems of his youth, which still finds its echo—although not without polemic distortion—in his "Ariadne's Lament" from the "Dionysus-Dithyrambs," Nietzsche's religious development began with the experience of being struck "in the heart" by the gaze (*Blick*) of the Lord, calling him to Himself:

Thou hast called:
Lord, I hurry,
And tarry
At the steps of Thy throne.
Burning with love
Thy gaze so heartily,
Painfully
Shines into my heart:
Lord, I come.

I was forlorn,
Enraptured,
Captured,
To Hell and suffering born.
Thou stoodst from afar:
Thy gaze ineffable
Impelling

25. Jaspers, *Nietzsche und das Christentum*, p. 19.
26. A, sec. 39.

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Struck me so oft:
Now I come gladly. . . .[27]

From all indications, with this point of departure the end of Nietzsche's positive relationship to Jesus had already been reached, for only a year later in his satirical poem "Before the Crucifix" Nietzsche challenges the Crucified One half-mockingly, half-pityingly to climb down from His "martyr's-stake" in order together with him to come "down to earth."[28] Long before Zarathustra will entreat his brothers to "remain true to the earth" and not to "believe those who speak to you of otherworldly hopes!"[29] the basic motif of such an appeal is already struck here. From this point on, Nietzsche's relationship to Jesus enters further and further into that state of disunity which arises from his lingering dependence on Jesus and his continually more pronounced movement toward the values of this life and world. This lingering dependence is responsible for the fact that Nietzsche articulates his growing alienation and the criticism that it provokes in somewhat muffled tones—certainly less harshly than he does in comparable instances.

It is significant in this regard that Thomas Mann, in agreeing with the judgment of August Messer (a Nietzsche interpreter from the twenties), comes to the conclusion that Nietzsche had left "the person Jesus of Nazareth" untouched "by his hatred for historical Christianity," although his explanation for this circumstance sounds rather daring: "for the sake of the end, of the cross, which he loved from the depths of his soul."[30] For it was not the convergence that he

27. "Du hast gerufen: / Herr, ich eile, / Und weile / An deines Thrones Stufen. / Von Lieb entglommen / Strahlt mir so herzlich, / Schmerzlich / Dein Blick ins Herz ein: / Herr, ich komme. /

Ich war verloren, / Taumeltrunken, / Versunken, / Zur Höll' und Qual erkoren. / Du standst von Ferne: / Dein Blick unsäglich / Beweglich / Traf mich so oft: / Nun komm' ich gerne . . ." (*Jugendschriften*; HKG [*Werke*], II, 80). In terms of the history of religious expression Nietzsche is here uniting himself with that mystical tradition which finds its most penetrating documentation in Nicholas of Cusa's treatise *De visione Dei* (1454). Cf. further the introduction to the latter work edited by Elisabeth Bohnenstädt (Leipzig: Meiner, 1944), pp. 1–52.

28. *Jugendschriften*; HKG (*Werke*), II, 188.

29. Z, Preface, sec. 3.

30. Thomas Mann, "Nietzsches Philosophie im Lichte unserer Erfahrung," in *Neue Studien* (Berlin: Suhrkamp, 1948), pp. 133f.; according to August Messer (*Erläuterungen zu Nietzsches Zarathustra* [Stuttgart: Strecker und Schröder, 1922], p. 20), Nietzsche always maintained for Jesus "a tender reverence in spite of his hostility to Christianity."

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anticipated in his end—it is well known that Nietzsche in his insanity spoke of being crucified by his doctors in "a complicated way," after he had been signing his messages of madness alternately "Dionysus" and "the Crucified One"—but rather his sense of having been affected by the figure of the living Jesus that colored all his criticism and that caused Jesus for Nietzsche to become the basis for repeated attempts at interpretation in spite of all his resistance and rejection.

It sounds very much like an attempt to understand Jesus from the standpoint of his own sociocultural presuppositions when Nietzsche concludes in *The Gay Science* that a Jesus Christ was possible only in a landscape "over which the melancholy and sublime thunderclouds of the angry Jehovah continually hung," so that "the rare and sudden breakthrough of a single ray of sunlight through the gruesome, all-encompassing, and perpetual day-night could be experienced as if it were a miracle of 'love.' "[31] To be sure, Christ, as Nietzsche concludes in *Human, All-Too-Human,* fostered the stupefaction of mankind by placing Himself "on the side of the intellectually weak"; yet one must think of Him "as the warmest of hearts."[32] Thus Nietzsche asks himself how much has to be overlooked in the total evaluation of a people "to which the world owes the most noble man (Christ), the most truly wise man (Spinoza), the most powerful book, and the most effective moral law in the world."[33] In line with this positive "prejudice" he would have us ponder the question he poses in *Beyond Good and Evil* of whether "underneath the holy fable and disguise of Jesus' life" there does not lie "hidden one of the most painful cases of the martyrdom of knowledge about love."[34] Even in *The Antichrist* he is still of the opinion that one could, "without stretching the meaning of the expression too much, call Jesus a 'free spirit,' " for "he does not care for anything solid."[35]

Thus it is that in *Zarathustra,* in which Nietzsche takes his final position opposing the message of Jesus, he creates an image of the latter that leaves open for Him the possibility of a "conversion" to Zarathustra's doctrine of belief in this world:

> Truly, too early died that Hebrew whom the preachers of slow death honor: and that he died too early has ever since spelled doom for many. . . .

31. FW, III, sec. 137.
32. MA, I, sec. 235.
33. Ibid., sec. 475.
34. J, IV, sec. 269.
35. A, sec. 32.

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> Had he but stayed in the wilderness and far from the good and the just! Perhaps he would have learned to live and to love the earth—and to laugh as well!
>
> Believe me, my brothers! He died too early; he himself would have recanted his teaching if he had lived to my age! He was noble enough to recant![36]

Eventually, however, the criticism inflicted upon Christianity penetrates through to its founder. Now Jesus appears in Nietzsche's view as the "holy anarchist," who, by summoning "the lowest classes, the outcasts and the 'sinners,' the chandalas within Judaism to opposition against the dominant order," became a "political criminal" and brought upon Himself the punishment of the cross.[37] In the final analysis, according to Nietzsche, it was Jesus Himself who was responsible for the fact that Christianity developed into a "form of mortal enmity against reality" that has never been surpassed.[38] Thus nothing would be more preposterous than to make a hero out of Jesus and to raise Him to the level of a "genius": "Speaking with the severity of a physiologist, an entirely different word would be more nearly fitting here: the word *idiot*."[39]

All the more surprising, then, is the sympathetic picture that Nietzsche draws in contrast to the "crude fable of the miracle-worker and redeemer" developed by Christian dogma regarding Jesus and His gospel. For Nietzsche the gospel is that "True life, eternal life has been found—it is not promised, it is here, it is in you: as a living in love, in love without removal or exclusion, without regard for station."[40] Accordingly, the "kingdom of heaven" proclaimed by Jesus is a "state of the heart—not something that is to come 'above the earth' or 'after death,' " nothing that we expect; "it has no yesterday and no day after tomorrow, it will not come in 'a thousand years'—it is an experience of the heart; it is everywhere, it is nowhere. . . ."[41]

This approach toward Jesus—which nevertheless keeps its distance—reaches its highest point when Nietzsche sums up "the en-

36. Z, I, "On Free Death."

37. A, sec. 27.

38. Ibid.

39. A, sec. 29. As is well known, this expression was suppressed by Nietzsche's sister in the early editions of A, and was finally brought to light through the investigations of Josef Hofmiller in his article "Nietzsche," in *Süddeutsche Monatshefte*, 29 (1931), 74–131.

40. A, sec. 29.

41. Ibid., sec. 34; cf. also *Nachlaß* (WM), sec. 161.

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tire gospel" in the words of the Crucified One to His fellow sufferer on the cross: " 'This was truly a godly man, a child of God!' says the malefactor. 'If you feel this'—answers the redeemer—'then you are in paradise, then you, too, are a child of God.' "[42] In fact, Nietzsche had already formulated this paraphrase of the crucifixion scene in Luke (23:39–43) perhaps even more cogently in the preliminary study to this text: "The malefactor on the cross: when even the criminal himself, suffering a painful death, judges: 'As this Jesus is dying, without rebellion, without enmity, benevolently and submissively—this alone is the right way,' then he has affirmed the gospel, and with that he is in paradise. . . ."[43]

IV. Jesus within the Field of Tension of Nietzsche's Own Self-Descriptions

Just as Nietzsche's youthful impression that he has been struck by the gaze of Christ finds its echo in "Ariadne's Lament" and, even earlier, in the accusations of the "ugliest man" (revealed by Zarathustra to be the murderer of God),[44] so we can also notice in the utterances of the Jesus-critic an existential disquietude brought about by the figure of Jesus, regardless of whether these utterances are intended to perform a critical or an analytical function. If we pursue this further, we come in the end to those role-figures through which Nietzsche plays in the—ultimately vain—hope of finding his own identity in them.

Beginning with the most strident formulation, the figure of the "Antichrist," we find that Nietzsche had already (in his "Attempt at a Self-Criticism" at the beginning of the new edition of *The Birth of Tragedy* of 1886) asked in the form of a barely concealed reference to himself: "who could claim to know the rightful name of the Antichrist?" And because during the writing of *Ecce Homo* the right time seems to have come to let the last of his masks fall, he also assures us very openly here: "I am, in Greek and not only in Greek, the Anti-

42. Ibid., sec. 35. In his Nietzsche article (above, n. 39) Hofmiller points out (pp. 94f.) that this passage as well was suppressed by the editors of the early editions of A (ostensibly because it was exegetically indefensible).

43. *Nachlaß* (WM), sec. 162; the extent to which this interpretation coincides with my own understanding of the scene is made clear in my article "Der Leidensgefährte," in *Geist und Leben*, 48 (1975), 40–50.

44. Just as the lamenting Ariadne feels herself wounded by the gaze of the god who is pursuing her, the gaze of the allseeing God also becomes the central motif for the murder of God by the "ugliest man" (Z, IV, "The Ugliest Man").

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christ. . . ."[45] In spite of this, and although in the brief concluding aphorism of his hyperbolic autobiography he plays off "his" god Dionysus against the Crucified One, he does not hesitate to imitate the air of Jesus when he assures us: "And in all seriousness, nobody before me knew the right way, the way upward; it is only beginning with me that there are hopes once again, tasks, ways that can be prescribed for culture—I am the bearer of these glad tidings.—And for this reason I am also a destiny."[46]

He subsequently even gives the reason for this sudden turning from critique to affinity. It is his will to drive a contradiction to such an extreme that it is transformed into a new affirmation: "I contradict as no one has contradicted before, and am nonetheless the antithesis of a No-saying spirit. I am a bearer of glad tidings like no one before me, I know tasks of such magnitude that up to now the very idea of them has been lacking; it is only beginning with me that there are hopes once again."[47]

In the same context Nietzsche gives us the motivation for the publication of his biography by stating that he has a "terrible fear" of someday being canonized—he does not wish "to be a saint, but would prefer to be a buffoon."[48] This preference for the role of the fool is not merely a manifestation of the hectic rush of a will to expression driven to its limits, for it is but a small step from the "buffoon" to the role-figure of the "madman," through whom Nietzsche first proclaimed the convincingly formulated message of the death of God.[49] In the proclamation of this "bearer of glad tidings" as well, a contradiction has been extended to the point where it becomes an affinity.

Not only does the "madman" expect consequences from the death of God that immediately remind us of Jesus' proclamation of the kingdom of God ushered in by Him, it is even more significant that he relates the story in such a way that it can function as a perfect reformulation of the type of parable that Jesus preferred to use in his proclamation of this kingdom of God.[50] Thus the possibility arises for

45. *Ecce Homo*, "Why I Write Such Good Books," sec. 2.

46. Ibid., Twilight of the Idols, sec. 2.

47. *Ecce Homo*, "Why I Am a Destiny," sec. 1.

48. Ibid. See also what has been said above (Part I of this article).

49. The aphorism "Die Gefangenen" from MA (II/II, sec. 84) must be considered more as a "provisional" formulation in this regard; cf. my study "Nietzsches Kritik des christlichen Gottesbegriffs und ihre theologischen Konsequenzen," *Philosophisches Jahrbuch*, 78 (1971), 34–65, 295–305.

50. This is further discussed in the work cited above (n. 49).

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a text-immanent solution to the problem, which then presents itself in the form of the shocking designation of Jesus as an "idiot." But before we begin to consider, along with Jaspers, Nietzsche's dependence on Dostoevsky's novel of the same name and to speculate whether Nietzsche was aware at least of the title of the work, which at the time of the writing of *The Antichrist* was not yet available in German translation, we should first take hold of this key offered by Nietzsche himself.[51] For when it is said of Jesus in *The Antichrist* that He not only "denied any breach between God and man," but that He "lived" precisely this proclaimed unity between God and man as His glad tidings,[52] it is basically that very thing being imputed to Him which is intended by the proclamation of the "madman," namely, the reclaiming of the attributes "wasted" on God for mankind itself.[53]

All this leads us to the conclusion that Nietzsche's criticism of Jesus, measured against the vehemence of his criticism of Christianity, is a great deal more restrained, because in his critical encounter with Jesus Nietzsche was confronted by the remains of a bond he had never quite given up. Zarathustra's relationship to the priests is also characterized by the same "disassociated affinity":

> Here are priests: and even if they are my enemies, pass by them quietly and with a sleeping sword!
>
> There are heroes even among them; many of them have suffered too much: thus they want to make others suffer. . . .
>
> But my blood is related to theirs; and I want to see my blood honored even in theirs.[54]

It is this feeling of a "blood relationship" withstanding all estrangement that determines Nietzsche's relationship to Jesus and makes it possible for us to hear in his No a repressed assent and in his accusations a suppressed homage. However far Nietzsche moves away from Jesus, it is still in the sense of the consciousness described in the aphorism "Star Friendship," of being inescapably associated with Him, the One he passed by and left behind.[55] This residual

51. Jaspers, *Nietzsche und das Christentum*, pp. 22f.

52. A, sec. 41.

53. The aphorism "Excelsior" (FW, III, sec. 285) deals expressly with this anthropological objective of the denial of God.

54. Z, II, "On Priests."

55. FW, IV, sec. 279. The aphorism must be considered as Nietzsche's most subtle self-revelation concerning his relationship to Richard Wagner.

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feeling of a bond between them may have moved Nietzsche to superscribe that exorbitant self-portrait he placed before mankind—in the last outbreak of his desire to communicate with it—with the "most Christian title of all," *Ecce Homo*.[56]

56. Mann, "Nietzsches Philosophie im Lichte unserer Erfahrung," p. 123.

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